

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

(a) first and second product support intelligent agents configured to perform product support operations in connection with a computer-related product, wherein at least one of the first and second product support intelligent agents is configured to perform at least one of a product support operation that identifies an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product and a product support operation that remedies an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product;

(b) a first agent platform configured to execute on a customer computer that utilizes the computer-related product; and

(c) a product support program resident on a product support computer used in providing product support for the computer-related product, the product support program including a second agent platform, and the product support program configured to dispatch the first product support intelligent agent to the customer computer for execution by the first agent platform, and to initiate execution of the second product support intelligent agent by the second agent platform, wherein the customer and product support computers are respectively disposed at separate customer and vendor sites and are respectively under the control of a customer that uses the computer-related product and a vendor that supplies at least a portion of the computer-related product.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first and second product support agents are configured to communicate with one another.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first product support intelligent agent is configured to execute on either of the first or second agent platforms.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the customer computer is the computer-related product.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the computer related-product comprises at least one of an internal software component, an internal hardware component, an external software component and an external hardware component associated with the customer computer.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein each of the first and second product support intelligent agents is configured to perform a product support operation selected from the group consisting of monitoring operational data, collecting operational data, analyzing operational data, identifying an undesirable operational condition in the customer computer, selecting another intelligent agent to remedy the undesirable operational condition, creating another intelligent agent to remedy the undesirable operational condition, performing at least one task to remedy the undesirable operational condition, and combinations thereof.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first product support intelligent agent is configured to collect operational data associated with the computer-related product, and wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to analyze the operational data collected by the first product support intelligent agent to identify an undesirable operational condition for the computer-related product.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the product support program is further configured to dispatch a remedy intelligent agent to remedy the undesirable operational condition.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the product support program is further configured to create the remedy intelligent agent.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the product support program is further configured to publish the remedy intelligent agent with a distribution control that limits distribution of the remedy intelligent agent.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the product support program is further configured to select the remedy intelligent agent from among a plurality of existing remedy agents.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the product support program is configured to dispatch the remedy intelligent agent between product releases of the computer-related product.

13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to collect operational data from the customer computer while resident on the product support computer.

14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the customer computer and the product support computer are coupled to one another over the Internet.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a cross-customer knowledge base including operational data associated with a plurality of customers, wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to analyze the operational data stored in the cross-customer knowledge base to identify an undesirable operational condition in the computer-related product.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to analyze the operational data using logic selected from the group consisting of neural network logic, fuzzy logic, pattern matching logic, script logic, and combinations thereof.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first and second product support intelligent agents are associated with different vendors.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of providing product support for a computer-related product, the method comprising:

(a) dispatching a first product support intelligent agent from a product support computer to a customer computer to execute on a first agent platform resident on the customer computer to perform a first product support operation associated with the computer-related product, wherein the customer and product support computers are respectively disposed at separate customer and vendor sites and are respectively under the control of a customer that uses the computer-related product and a vendor that supplies at least a portion of the computer-related product; and

(b) a computer-implemented step of executing a second product support intelligent agent on a second agent platform resident on the product support computer to perform a second product support operation associated with the computer-related product, wherein at least one of the first and second product support intelligent agents is configured to perform at least one of a product support operation that identifies an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product and a product support operation that remedies an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the first and second product support agents are configured to communicate with one another when performing the first and second product support operations.

20. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein each of the first and second product support operations are selected from the group consisting of monitoring operational data, collecting operational data, analyzing operational data, identifying an

undesirable operational condition in the customer computer, selecting another intelligent agent to remedy the undesirable operational condition, creating another intelligent agent to remedy the undesirable operational condition, performing at least one task to remedy the undesirable operational condition, and combinations thereof.

21. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the first product support intelligent agent is configured to collect operational data associated with the computer-related product, and wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to analyze the operational data collected by the first product support intelligent agent to identify an undesirable operational condition for the computer-related product.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, further comprising dispatching a remedy intelligent agent to at least one of the customer computer and the product support computer to remedy the undesirable operational condition.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising creating the remedy intelligent agent.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, further comprising publishing the remedy intelligent agent with a distribution control that limits distribution of the remedy intelligent agent.

25. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein dispatching the remedy intelligent agent occurs between product releases of the computer-related product.

26. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to collect operational data from the customer computer while resident on the product support computer.

27. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the customer computer and the product support computer are coupled to one another over the Internet.

28. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to analyze operational data stored in a cross-customer knowledge base to identify an undesirable operational condition in the computer-related product.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the second product support intelligent agent is configured to analyze the operational data using logic selected from the group consisting of neural network logic, fuzzy logic, pattern matching logic, script logic, and combinations thereof.

30. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the first and second product support intelligent agents are associated with different vendors.

31. (Currently Amended) A program product, comprising:

(a) first and second product support intelligent agents configured to perform product support operations in connection with a computer-related product, wherein at least one of the first and second product support intelligent agents is configured to perform at least one of a product support operation that identifies an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product and a product support operation that remedies an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product;

(b) a first agent platform configured to execute on a customer computer that utilizes the computer-related product;

(c) a product support program configured to reside on a product support computer used in providing product support for the computer-related product, the product support program including a second agent platform, and the product support program configured to dispatch the first product support intelligent agent

to the customer computer for execution by the first agent platform, and to initiate execution of the second product support intelligent agent by the second agent platform, wherein the customer and product support computers are respectively disposed at separate customer and vendor sites and are respectively under the control of a customer that uses the computer-related product and a vendor that supplies at least a portion of the computer-related product; and

(d) at least one tangible computer-readable medium bearing the first and second product support agents, the first agent platform, and the product support program.

32. (Canceled).

33. (Previously Presented) A method of providing product support for a computer-related product, the method comprising:

(a) collecting operational data from a plurality of customer computers that utilize the computer-related product during operation of the plurality of customer computers;

(b) identifying an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product from the collected operational data, wherein the identified undesirable operational condition includes a technical problem resulting in at least one of incorrect and non-optimal operation of at least one customer computer;

(c) creating a product support intelligent agent configured to remedy the undesirable operational condition; and

(d) distributing the product support intelligent agent to at least first and second customer computers from the plurality of customer computers to remedy the undesirable operational condition in the first and second customer computers, wherein at least one of collecting operational data, identifying the undesirable condition, creating the product support intelligent agent and distributing the product support intelligent agent is computer-implemented.

34. - 56. (Canceled)

57. (Previously Presented) A method of providing product support for a computer-related product, the method comprising:

(a) collecting operational data from a plurality of customer computers that utilize the computer-related product during operation of the plurality of customer computers;

(b) with at least one computer-implemented intelligent agent, analyzing the operational data from the plurality of customer computers; and

(c) identifying as a result of the analysis an undesirable operational condition associated with the computer-related product in at least one of the customer computers.

58. -92. (Canceled)

93. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method of providing product support for a computer-related product, the method comprising:

(a) executing a first intelligent agent to perform a first task associated with remedying an undesirable operational condition associated with a customer computer that utilizes the computer-related product, wherein the first intelligent agent is provided by a first vendor that supplies a first component associated with the computer-related product; and

(b) executing a second intelligent agent to perform a second task associated with remedying the undesirable operational condition, wherein the second intelligent agent is provided by a second vendor that supplies a second component associated with the computer-related product.

94. - 104. (Canceled)

105. (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of the first and second product support intelligent agents is configured to perform a product support operation of selecting another intelligent agent to remedy the undesirable operational condition.

106. (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of the first and second product support intelligent agents is configured to perform a product support operation of creating another intelligent agent to remedy the undesirable operational condition.